

18 January 1985

ARTICLE APPEARED
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Washington Wire

A Special Weekly Report From
The Wall Street Journal's
Capital Bureau

FOREIGN POLICY shapes up as a hot congressional topic.

The increased attention could hamper Reagan policies. New Senate Foreign Relations Chairman Lugar will press his concerns about U.S. dealings with South Africa. New House Intelligence Committee members will maintain the panel's opposition to covertly aiding rebels in Nicaragua. Democrats vie to fill at least five vacant seats on the panel.

Lawmakers say the once low-profile intelligence committees now offer more visibility. Sen. Eagleton is willing to give up a coveted Senate Appropriations spot to get on the foreign-relations panel. Aspirants for higher office seek foreign-policy credentials; Sen. Bradley wangles a seat on the Senate Intelligence Committee.

Sen. Hart issues a press release noting that his Paris meeting with French President Mitterrand ran "longer than scheduled."

—Compiled by RONALD G. SHAFER